



## President's Message: Bending Spectral Lines

When we shine light on a glass prism, the visible spectrum that is light, bends into the colors of the rainbow. It does this because each colour has a unique wavelength, and the medium it travels through affects each colour differently. In 1801, Thomas Young demonstrated that individual colours projected on a screen, could even have their paths altered in different ways depending on gaps or barriers in the way. So, what does a Physics lesson have to do with this month's message?

We begin October having gone through a myriad of September emotions and unfamiliar start-up plans. The journey for each of us has been as unique as the spectral lines. The "normal" September routine may have remained the same for some, yet for others it was vastly different. Some members began the year teaching remotely, others only see half their class a day, while still others adapted to new courses with days notice. The starting point for our students was likely all over the spectrum as well, and recovery learning in all its many forms, is now part of our teaching lexicon.

We can try to use a similar lens when it comes to equity in education. The end of September shines light on Orange Shirt day, reflecting on the impact of Residential Schools, and how we move toward reconciliation through education. We use a variety of media, lessons and impactful stories, to foster empathy, and to attempt to walk alongside survivors. Students and teachers alike, have struggled with equitable access to technology to ensure remote learning is viable and meaningful. We all see the ripple of poverty in our classrooms everyday. The experiences of our Indigenous and LGBTQ colleagues may differ, but they need allies just the same. Female administrators are in the minority, as are male educators in Early Years classrooms. As leaders in fairness and equity, we try to look through the eyes of all, but perhaps we can't. We don't have the scope nor understanding of each individual path. What we can do is recognize barriers, and support those affected as they work their way through. At a recent seminar, I overheard this statement; "If we see a leak in the roof, we know we have to do something about it. We know we need to fix it. Why is it not the same with equity when we see a leak in society?"

By concentrating our focus, we may be able to capture the broader image. We can listen and look for opportunities to celebrate differences, while working toward solidarity. **At the beginning of this month you have been asked by email to participate in our local survey.** Using the data, we hope to focus on areas where you indicate there is a need for resources, funding or development. We hope to be able to find means of filling those gaps for Interlake teachers. We know your time is valuable, so **thank you for filling out the survey before October 9<sup>th</sup>.** Stay safe and be well!

Continuing with the music trend of the last issue and to go along with this month's equity theme, these issue's song is "What About Us?" by P!nk. Official video & lyrics can be found [HERE](#).

## [From the desk of your Equity and Social Justice Chair, Kathy Simcoe:](#)

I want to start by extending a virtual elbow bump for having survived the first month of an unprecedented year. With all the stress about the state of health, and threat of looming changes, priorities in both school and classrooms have shifted to damage control and trying our best to keep everyone safe and healthy, with fingers crossed.

This fall, at best, we find ourselves in a team, “pulling together” as we all struggle to adjust to a game with moving goal posts. We have to assume that at some point in the not too distant future, we will resume the freedoms we enjoyed with a new appreciation. Until then, I think it is important to consider that the struggle may not be equal for families, our students, and our colleagues and how we can support each other.

In these times often the demographics hardest hit, are the most vulnerable to begin with. A gender gap seems to be emerging, not only because of women’s over-representation in stressful front-line jobs but also the disproportionate percentage of unemployment experienced by women, who are often the primary care-givers of both children and the aged. Furthermore, isolation due to Covid has been found to cause heightened stress in homes and increased cases of domestic violence. As educators we feel the ripple effect of stress on families. It is important now more than ever, that we not only support our students and their families, but also make taking care of our own mental and physical health a priority, and use the supports at our disposal.

It’s not only parents in front-line jobs who are feeling the pinch. You or someone you work alongside may be experiencing child care shortages, may for health reasons be short of sick time and are fearful that an imposed self-isolation will unfairly affect you financially. It’s supporting our members in finding workable solutions for those types of situations, that is the job of your local ITA.

Looking ahead to a future return to business as usual, I urge you to keep a questioning mind on equity issues. For example, if gender neutral washrooms seem impossible due to cohort issues in your school, is there a plan to include them? Are you or your colleagues losing time due to increased supervision as students spend more time in smaller cohorts? Are some groups affected disproportionately by these issues? Are there new supports in place for vulnerable students and families, to replace some of the social programs that we have had to put on hold? These are all dialogues that would be best opened up first with the admin in your building with an eye on making sure that in the future “new normal” we do not end up losing what we have worked so hard to gain. Remember, as famous Japanese writer *Ryunosuke Satoro* stated, “*Individually, we are one drop. Together we are an ocean.*”

There is a LifeSpeak video titled:  
*“Rethinking the Language: Diversity,  
Inclusion, Equity and Accommodation.”*  
Click the MTS LifeSpeak Library link  
[HERE](#).



**MTS NEWS:****World Teachers' Day:**

World Teachers' Day was created by UNESCO in 1994 to celebrate the remarkable work of teachers from around the world.

Everyone can remember a teacher who made a real difference in their life. And when people talk about their most influential teachers they do it with so much admiration that sometimes you can even hear a catch in their voice.

To watch a greeting from MTS President, James Bedford, and find out more information, click [HERE](#).

Feel free to post what's happening at your school and use the hashtag **#worldteachersday** and **#thankateacher**.

# Thank You

For early mornings and late nights  
**FOR MAKING SAFE SPACES**  
 For coaching and consoling  
**FOR SHINING A LIGHT**  
 For strength, creativity, and love  
**FOR FINDING A WAY**  
 For leading and learning  
**FOR BEING OUR TEACHERS**

World Teachers' Day | October 5, 2020

**Your Union working for you on Priority Issues:**

The Society has been working continuously on behalf of members, to ensure that the return to school remains safe and sustainable long term. They are consistently at the table during provincial education planning discussions as part of the Province's Response Planning Team (RPT), along with MB Education, MSBA and other education stakeholders.

MTS advocated frequently and publicly for mandatory masks, and most recently for the suspension of Grade 12 Provincial exams. The MTS strategy is to continue pressing government on the integral issues to make gains for teachers in the classroom. They will stay at the table and work for members on a number of important issues that remain, including:

- Class size/Attaining 2 m social distancing in all schools/Allocation of funds to do so.
- Blended learning & workload expectations for teachers.
- Work/role intensification for Principals.

Click [HERE](#) to read more about all of the MTS positions and concerns.

**MTS PD Day 2020 – October 23:**

Registration is open for all SAGE groups.

Click [HERE](#) to register.



## Benefits News:

### Manitoba Public School Employees (MPSE) - Group Life Insurance Information:

The MPSE plan is governed by the MPSE Benefits Trust, which is a Trust between MSBA, the Manitoba School Boards Association, and MTS. Under this plan, as public-school employees you **must** have life insurance to 200% of your salary. The premium for this amount is cost shared, 50/50 by the division and you. You can also elect to have the insurance extended to 300, 400, 500, 600, and 700% of salary. However, the option of choosing 600- and 700-times salary coverage will cease as at January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

The amount of insurance, above 200%, is decided **by you** upon commencement of employment/enrollment or can be increased or decreased **either 90 days before or after a 'Life event'** (marriage, common law after one year, or birth of first child) **without providing medical evidence of insurability**. It can also be increased or decreased **at any time by providing medical evidence of insurability**. The premiums for all elected amounts are paid by you, the employee. Premiums are \$0.139 per thousand of insurance.

More information on the insurance can be found on the **MPSE plan website** at [www.mpsebp.ca](http://www.mpsebp.ca) - **click on 'Group Life' which will provide basic plan information and French or English plan booklets.**

### LifeSpeak Wellness Platform: Looking for support, advice, information or inspiration?

#### **Expert Help Navigating the Covid-19 Pandemic:**

The COVID-19 pandemic affects all of us. We live in uncertainty, life's habits and familiar patterns have all but disappeared, and no one knows what the next hour or day holds. LifeSpeak's experts can help you carve out some peace of mind by giving you tips and strategies that are easy to implement, right now. Share this information with your loved ones; we can all make a difference.

Here are just some of the almost 500 videos available in the library:

- How to let go of control in uncertain times.
- Managing sleep in the time of coronavirus.
- Ways to build an intentional family life within the reality of Covid.
- How to manage video conference fatigue.
- How to make working remotely a success.
- Being alone together: The social pandemic of loneliness.
- How to manage anxiety during the Covid outbreak.

To access, sign into MyProfile [www.memberlink.mbteach.org](http://www.memberlink.mbteach.org) and click on the LifeSpeak link.

#### Contact:

Send question or concerns to **Cathy** at [president@interlaketeachers.ca](mailto:president@interlaketeachers.ca), or contact a **Teacher Welfare Staff Officer** at 1-800-262-8803.

Please visit [www.mbteach.org](http://www.mbteach.org), regularly, and be sure to update your My Profile information. Follow ITA on Twitter @InterlakeTA or at [www.interlaketeachers.ca](http://www.interlaketeachers.ca).